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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 TALLINN 000294

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [ETRD](#) [CVIS](#) [BY](#) [UP](#) [EN](#)
SUBJECT: COMMERCE DEPUTY SECRETARY SAMPSON'S AND EUR
ASSISTANT SECRETARY FRIED'S MEETING WITH ESTONIAN FOREIGN
MINISTER PAET

Classified By: DCM - Jeff Goldstein
Reasons 1.5 (b) & (d)

SUMMARY

1. (C) Noting that Estonia would have to decide this fall on the future of its troop deployment in Iraq, Foreign Minister Urmas Paet asked visiting Deputy Secretary of Commerce David Sampson and Assistant Secretary of State Dan Fried how long the U.S. believes coalition forces will be necessary in Iraq. Fried responded that the U.S. is careful to avoid deadlines, but that the way out in Iraq was the way forward, through progress in the political process and the development of a stronger Iraqi military. Fried and Sampson urged the Estonians to share their experience, both in reform and in dealing with Moscow, with emerging democracies such as Georgia, noting that the Georgians need the advice. The three agreed on the need for a realistic approach to Russia, although Paet noted that as far as Estonian-Russian relations are concerned it takes two to tango, and the Russians don't seem to be in the mood to dance. Paet put in a pitch for progress toward Estonia's inclusion in the Visa Waiver Program and indicated very clearly that the Estonian government would like for President Bush to stop in Tallinn, possibly on the margins of this year's G-8 or NATO summits, both of which will take place nearby. END SUMMARY

2. (U) On the margins of the state funeral of President Lennart Meri, Estonian Foreign Minister Paet hosted a meeting with the U.S. delegation: Commerce Deputy Secretary David Sampson, EUR Assistant Secretary Dan Fried, and Ambassador Wos. Paet began by graciously expressing his government's appreciation for the fact that President Bush had sent a delegation to the funeral, noting that ours was the only high-level delegation to come from outside of Europe. Paet and the U.S. delegation went on to discuss a series of issues, including Iraq, Afghanistan, Ukraine, Belarus, Russia, Georgia, US-EU relations, the Visa Waiver Program, and the Estonians' hope that President Bush will be able to visit Tallinn this year.

GWOT ISSUES

3. (C) Deputy Secretary Sampson expressed deep appreciation for Estonia's support in the Global War on Terrorism. Assistant Secretary Fried seconded this, noting that in sending troops to the UK PRT in Helmand, which would be in the thick of the anti-poppy campaign, the Estonians were undertaking a tough assignment. Paet responded that the decision to increase Estonia's presence in Afghanistan from 20 soldiers to 120 was a big step for the country. He noted that the parliament has extended the mandate for the Estonian

deployment to Iraq until the end of this year. This fall, Estonia will have to debate next steps, and much will depend on the UN mandate, the situation on the ground in Iraq, and the plans of the United States and other leading allies. He asked how long the U.S. believed the presence of the multinational forces in Iraq would be necessary. A/S Fried responded that the U.S. has been careful to avoid setting any deadlines. The way forward is clear. As the political track develops -- with the next step the formation, we hope, of a national unity government -- and the Iraqi military becomes more capable, then the size and the role of the coalition forces can be changed. The way out is the way forward, through success, not cutting and running. Success must be political, and this is why the U.S. is working so hard to help the Iraqis form a new government.

THE NEIGHBORHOOD

¶4. (SBU) On Belarus, A/S Fried and Minister Paet agreed that the next step should be sanctions targeted against key Belarusian political leaders. Paet noted with regret that he had recently read that Lukashenko had taken his family skiing in one EU country. Fried, agreed that this was regrettable and astonishing, stating that the interests of a country's banking sector should not outweigh the need for the U.S. and the EU to take a principled stand against leaders who in today's Europe still throw their opponents into jail. Fried noted that change in Belarus will take time, but that meanwhile we need to make our position clear.

¶5. (SBU) Paet noted that he had just spoken with the Deputy Foreign Minister of Ukraine, and that Estonia was keenly interested in the outcome of the Ukrainian election and the question of what direction Ukraine would now take. A/S Fried

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said that, while the U.S. would work with whatever government the Ukrainian people choose, we hoped that the next government would be "a coalition of the orangish variety." It is possible, Fried added, that the Party of Regions could reform itself, but he was not yet convinced that this had yet happened.

¶6. (SBU) Bringing the discussion around to Russia, A/S Fried noted that the two paragraphs devoted to Russia in the new U.S. National Security Strategy were very clear. The U.S. is concerned about the state of democracy in Russia and Russia's relations with its neighbors, almost all of which are complicated. Paet said that Estonia appreciates the realistic U.S. approach to Russia and is trying to take a similar approach in its own relations with Moscow. Unfortunately, "it takes two to tango," and the Russian side does not seem to be interested in moving forward constructively. Coming back to Russia later in the discussion, A/S Fried noted that the G-8 summit will be a real challenge for Putin, who will have to decide what kind of Russia he wants to show the world. He concluded by saying that we will work with Russia where we can and as much as we can, but we will also push back wherever necessary.

¶7. (C) Deputy Secretary Sampson noted that Estonia's history and the legacy of President Meri give the country important moral authority and urged Estonia to work closely to help other emerging democracies. Fried noted that during a recent visit to Georgia he told President Saakashvili that today Georgia is in the same position that Estonia and Latvia were in 10 years ago, directly in the focus of Russia's ire. He advised the Georgians to do the same thing the Estonians and Latvians had done: refuse to be baited and proceed with reforms. The Estonians need to work with the Georgians, who need Estonia's advice. Saakashvili does, and so does the Minister of Defense, who sometimes is too enthusiastic about resolving the South Ossetia situation through military means, which would be a disaster.

ECONOMIC ISSUES

¶8. (SBU) Deputy Secretary Sampson expressed admiration for the "astonishing" economic success Estonia has produced over the last 15 years. He indicated that the U.S. wants to build on our current economic and commercial relations, and promised that the Department of Commerce would be represented at a high-level at a Baltic investment conference being held in Riga this May. When the discussion turned to U.S.-EU economic relations, Paet said that while there are elements of competition in the relationship, he believes that China and India, not the U.S., are Europe's main competitors. He express the hope that this view would drive policy development in Brussels. Secretary Sampson noted that the U.S. is working closely with the EU, and believes there is a great deal of room for cooperative efforts, such as a joint attempt to deal with IPR problems in third countries. He urged the Estonians to stand up strongly for such cooperation in Brussels.

BILATERAL ISSUES

¶9. (SBU) Paet also raised two bilateral issues: the Visa Waiver Program (VWP), and the Estonians' desire that President Bush visit Tallinn, this year if possible. On the VWP, Paet noted that this was a very emotional issue. A/S Fried responded that the VWP roadmap shows a clear way forward. The key condition is a refusal rate of under 3% for two years running. There are other conditions as well. The Estonians have made progress, with the refusal rate for Estonian citizens now down to single digits. Fried assured Paet that the President pays close attention to this issue, and added that he personally believes it would be good for a Central European country to make it into the VWP to demonstrate that it can be done. Estonia might be first, but this would depend to a large extent on the Estonians themselves.

¶10. (SBU) Regarding a presidential visit, Paet noted that President Bush's speech in Riga last May was very important for Estonia. He pointed out that the President will be back in this region twice this year, for the G-8 and NATO summits, and said Estonians would like to see him visit Tallinn as well. Without reference to possible timing, Ambassador Fried said he would recommend a visit, but that we would have to wait and see. (NOTE: No sitting U.S. President has visited Estonia.)

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¶11. (U) A/S Fried cleared this message.

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